



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

Honorable Jerry Lewis
Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6018

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to inform you of my views regarding the importance of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program and the direction that I have given regarding how the program should be conducted in the near-term.

The JSF program is critically important to the modernization of United States conventional forces and is the cornerstone of tactical aircraft modernization. It will replace 1,763 Air Force, 480 Navy, and 609 Marine Corps aircraft; 2,852 aircraft in total. The JSF's stealth, advanced avionics, and ability to carry a full array of modern precision munitions will make it much more capable than the legacy aircraft it replaces when operating under challenging circumstances against modern air defenses. It is also critical to the modernization of our ally forces for coalition welfare.

The joint approach central to JSF avoids the three parallel development programs for service-unique aircraft that would otherwise have been necessary, saving at least \$15 billion. Commonality in support and training offers significant additional savings for decades to come. The JSF is the Department's only affordable solution to providing the large number of modern, highly capable aircraft that the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps must have to sustain their tactical fleets through the first half of the 21st century.

At the inception of the JSF program, it was decided that early flight testing of concept demonstration aircraft was essential to reduce risk in this ambitious effort to acceptable levels. Nothing that we have learned since that time has altered this judgment. Therefore, the Department will complete the ongoing competitive concept demonstration phase with robust flight testing of both contractors' aircraft. We will ensure that each contractor is provided a full opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of its approach to the JSF (assuming timely availability of each). Moreover, I can assure you that each contractor team has stated that they are fully committed to exercising this opportunity. Our objective is to ensure that all currently planned concept demonstration activities are completed prior to the decision on engineering and manufacturing development (EMD).

The Department has examined a number of options for continuing the JSF program once concept demonstration is completed. These options all assume the selection of a single, winning design. They range from winner-take-all to competition



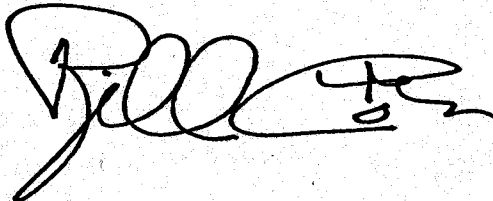
throughout production. Each option that we have studied offers potential benefits and drawbacks, both tangible and intangible. We will continue to evaluate these options and to develop a comprehensive assessment that our successors can use as they make decisions on the future course of the JSF program. I have asked the RAND Corporation to review these options, including cost, and report back by December 1st. Obviously, before any such decision were to be made, the Congress would be fully consulted.

Over the past several months the Department has also updated its cost estimates for the JSF EMD phase, as we anticipate transition to that phase after completion of the ongoing demonstration activities next year. The most recent estimates incorporate our increasingly detailed understanding of needed remaining development activities, including a competitive engine program, as well as the phased integration of a full set of precision and other weapons on the JSF platform. Because JSF is one of the Department's most critical modernization priorities, I have directed the Departments of the Air Force and Navy to ensure that their FY 2002-07 programs fully fund the most recent estimates of JSF EMD and initial production costs.

At this key juncture, keeping the JSF program on schedule is essential to sustaining the future readiness and force levels of our tactical aviation units as existing aircraft reach the end of their service lives. This is particularly critical for meeting the replacement schedules for the Air Force and the Marines. Accordingly, I ask your support for the required development funding in the FY2001 President's Budget.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that we sustain the strong support needed in the Congress to successfully execute the JSF program. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John P. Murtha", with a stylized flourish at the end.

cc: Honorable John P. Murtha
Ranking Democrat